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USSR Report

CONSUMER GOODS AND DOMESTIC TRADE

No. 1

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CONSUMER GOODS PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION

INDUSTRIALIZATION OF PUBLIC FEEDING PROPOSED

Minsk SOVETSKAYA BELORUSSIYA in Russian 4 Jan 80 p 2

[Article by G. Grishchenkov, Belorussian SSR deputy minister of trade: "Put Public Catering on an Industrial Basis"]

[Text] As of the present time public catering has taken shape in its economic aspect as an independent sector of the national economy. However, in order for this sector to be on a par with present-day requirements, its conversion to an industrial basis is necessary. This pertains first of all to the organization of the production of semimanufactures and of output with a high degree of readiness so that they can be supplied everywhere to restaurants, lunch rooms, cafes and snack bars. When the semimanufactures are prepared in one place, it is possible to do a better job of mechanizing and automating labor-intensive processes and of utilizing equipment with great productivity, while in more narrow terms it is the task of culinary specialists locally to add the "individual" touches to the semimanufacture.

Experience has shown that the production of semimanufactures at industrial enterprises is most advisable and economically profitable. The production of a ton of meat semimanufactures at meat combines is twice as cheap as at lunch rooms and in restaurants. Hence, those of us in the republic have specifically opted for the path of joining into cooperatives with industry. At the present time, meat semimanufactures for public catering are produced at 20 meat combines in the republic. These supplies are increasing annually. Thus, in 1979 public catering enterprises obtained 35 percent more semimanufactures from meat combines than in 1975.

However, these figures do not fully satisfy us. For, as you know, public catering enterprises are increasing the consumption of semimanufactures from year to year, while industry does not have time for them. Thus, whereas there is an over-all growth in the quantity of semimanufactures, their relative share in the total expenditure of raw material was reduced by 1.3 percent in comparison with 1975. As a result, the quotas for volume set by the government of the republic are not being fulfilled. This question is being resolved in an especially poor manner in Minskaya and Grodnenskaya oblasts.

It is necessary for the Belorussian SSR Ministry of the Meat and Dairy Industry to reconsider its attitude toward increasing the production capacities for increasing the output of meat semimanufactures for public catering.

A considerable defect is also the failure by meat combines to fulfill the assortment agreed upon with the lunch room trusts and public catering combines. The production of soup collections and ragout, which cannot be utilized in public catering, now occupies up to 50 percent in the production of small-serving and à la carte semimanufactures.

The share of fish production being turned out by industry occupies up to 75 percent of the total quantity of fish semimanufactures being used in public catering. At the same time, the supply of them has been reduced by 18 percent during the three years of the 10th Five-Year Plan. If 3,717 tons were obtained in 1975, then 3,170 tons were obtained in 1979.

Despite the fact that a fish complex with a production capacity of 6 tons in the semimanufactures shop was built in Minsk, only 2 to 3 tons of semimanufactures are being delivered at the present time to the public catering enterprises of the city of Minsk, and then not in the necessary assortment. The quota for deliveries of fish semimanufactures to public catering enterprises in the volume established by government decisions was fulfilled by only 66 percent, while for Minsk it was fulfilled by half.

Naturally, the inadequacy of fish resources and unevenness in its supply have had an effect on this failure to fulfill the quotas. But, all the same, the Belrybpromsbyt [Belorussian SSR Fish Industry Marketing Administration] could devote much more attention to the needs of public catering. Shops for the production of fish semimanufactures have been organized in conjunction with associations of the Belrybpromsbyt in only six cities of the republic, and, what is more, not even in all the oblast centers. Thus, there is no shop in Vitebsk for the production of fish semimanufactures in conjunction with the Vitebsk Fish Association.

Some experience has been gathered in the republic in the work of cooperation with the food industry. At the present time, canned vegetable products, such as vegetable-mushroom solyanka [thick soup made with fish or meat, with seasoning, Trans.], green peas, cucumbers and tomatoes, are widely used at public catering enterprises. However, products from the food industry are obviously inadequately utilized in public catering, first of all, because canned vegetable goods cost more than fresh vegetables. The second factor that holds one back from putting products from the food industry into use is the fact that their shipment by enterprises of the Ministry of the Food Industry is not made evenly by quarters, but totally during the autumn period. We are then simply not in a position to store canned goods made from vegetables until the springtime, when the greatest need for them is experienced.

In 1979 the republic's public catering system obtained a fast-frozen vegetable mixture from the Polish People's Republic, a mixture which contained cauliflower Brussels sprouts, carrots, potatoes and onions. Dishes prepared

from this mixture received a good evaluation from patrons, whereas rather small input is required for their preparation. We shall also need analogous mixtures in the future. I would also like to see our food industry organize the production of this mixture from fast-frozen products in the requisite volumes, as well as of pickled plums, canned sorrel, sauces and various seasonings for public catering.

Without question, providing public catering enterprises with semimanufactures and products with a high degree of readiness [for use] is, in the long term, a task belonging to industry. However, having taken into account the fact that industrial enterprises for the production of this output are to be found at the present time in far from every city of the republic, while the existing ones cannot supply us with everything that is needed in view of the limited extent of production capacities, public catering has been forced to seek a way out of this situation by itself.

Independent oblast administrations of public catering have now been created in the oblasts, while lunch room trusts or combines have been created in the rest of the cities. One of the chief tasks facing the newly created formations is the organization of the production of semimanufactures and products with a high degree of readiness [for use] in lunch rooms with initial processing facilities [stolovyye-zagotovochnyye] and in the existing shops that are connected with major lunch rooms of industrial enterprises and educational institutions.

Deserving of attention is the work of the Minsk Initial Processing Factory, at which 2.5 tons of meat semimanufactures, 9 tons of peeled and scrubbed potatoes, many culinary products and confectionary items are produced daily on the average.

The majority of public catering enterprises of Minsk are supplied with peeled and scrubbed potatoes from the shop for the cleaning and sulfitation of potatoes at the Pervomayskiy Fruit and Vegetable Combine, at which more than 20 tons of peeled and scrubbed potatoes are turned out daily. A shop for the cooking of sugar beets, which produces daily 1.3 tons of stewed sugar beets for the city's stores, has been set up in the Grodno Fruit and Vegetable Trade Administration.

We have great potentials for the production of stewed vegetables at the Samokhvalovichskiy Fruit and Vegetable Combine, where the cooking of sugar beets for public catering enterprises and culinary items stores of Minsk will be done already in the very near future. The question of setting up the production of other vegetable products as well is being resolved.

Work is being actively pursued on the conversion of public catering enterprises to semimanufactures in Gomel'. A meat combine has, in the main, been supplying them here. However, in connection with the fact that the meat combine cannot provide for the total demand, shops have been set up for the production of semimanufactures on the base of the lunch rooms of a number of industrial enterprises. Peeled and scrubbed potatoes are being turned out

for the enterprises of Gomel' in the shop for the cleaning and sulfitation of potatoes associated with the vegetable storehouse; carrots are also peeled here. The production of vegetable semimanufactures has been set up in 10 major lunch rooms of industrial enterprises, to which 4 to 6 enterprises that serve previously prepared food [predpriyatiya-dogotovochnyye] have been assigned.

The production of meat, fish and vegetable semimanufactures has been set up in Mogilëv in conjunction with the "Lavaan" Public Catering Combine on the base of a lunch room with initial processing facilities; 25 lunch rooms serving previously prepared food are supplied with these semimanufactures.

In Baranovich, Borisov and other cities, all the public catering enterprises attached to industrial enterprises, as well as school and student lunch rooms are working under a comprehensive system for provisioning with semimanufactures.

Measures are being taken by the Ministry of Trade to increase further the production of semimanufactures and of products with a higher degree of readiness [for use]. It has been stipulated that the production of semimanufactures in the "Verasy" Lunch Room, which has initial processing facilities, of the Novopolotsk Lunch Room Trust and in the fish shops of the Vitebsk and Orsha lunch room trusts be increased by virtue of better utilization of production capacities. A line for the cleaning and sulfitation of potatoes will be set up in 1980 on the base of a lunch room with initial processing facilities at one of the plants in Rogachev. The production of stewed sugar beets, peeled carrots and onions is being organized here for the supply of lunch rooms with initial processing facilities and of culinary items stores.

We are organizing the production of semimanufactures for enterprises of the city that serve previously prepared food upon the commissioning of a lunch room with initial processing facilities at the pulp and paper plant in Svetlogorsk.

Conversion to an industrial basis requires revision of the practices in the construction and modernization of public catering enterprises. On the one hand, we shall pursue a policy directed toward construction of factories (lunch rooms) with initial processing facilities and toward the creation of base enterprises for the production of semimanufactures with a high degree of readiness [for use], while, on the other hand, we shall carry out extensive work on the specialization of the existing facilities and of the network that is being newly opened up, since technological processes possess a stable, uninterrupted nature in specialized enterprises, such as, for instance, [bul'byanaya?], shashlik [Caucasian spit roasted mutton, Trans.], and pelmeni [Siberian meat dumplings] enterprises; the production cost is much lower here, while the funds invested are recovered more rapidly.

A conference devoted to the problems of the conversion of public catering enterprises to an industrial basis was held at the end of last year in Minsk. Managers of oblast public catering administrations, lunch room trusts and

combines and representatives of the ministries of the meat and dairy and food industries and of the Belrybpromsbyt took part in it.

The further development of public catering along the path of industrialization and specialization will enable one to accomplish successfully the tasks of growth in labor productivity, of improvement in the quality of production turned out and of raising the level of services to the populace.

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CSO: 1827

CONSUMER GOODS PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION

FINANCING CAPITAL CONSTRUCTION IN LIGHT, FOOD INDUSTRIES

Moscow FINANSY SSSR in Russian No 2, Feb 80 pp 22-24

[Article by G. Ye. Murzagaliyev, manager of the Kazakh Republic Office of the USSR Stroybank]

[Text] Kazakhstan light and food industry workers are contributing to solving the tasks of the 10th Five-Year Plan. Important significance is attached to developing these branches in the republic. Since 1976, their fixed assets have increased by 395 million rubles, ensuring higher rates of growth in gross output volume. Large industrial enterprises provided with the most modern equipment and advanced production technology have been put into operation: the Ust'-Kamenogorsk Silk Fabric Combine, the Kokchetav Ribbon Loom Factory, a brewery in Chimkent, and bakeries in Ural'sk, Dzhambul, Zyryanovsk, Aktyubinsk, Tselinograd and Novyy-Uzen.

The course the party has charted of introducing intensive growth factors and increasing work efficiency and quality in every way possible depends largely and sometimes decisively on the use of capital investments and fixed assets. In this connection, it is very essential that maximum capital investment economic effectiveness be achieved with minimal expenditures.

The resolutions of the 25th CPSU Congress pose with particular urgency the question of the necessity of concentrating investments in the decisive sectors, of eliminating scattering of investments; the necessity of directing funds foremost into renovating and retooling existing enterprises on the basis of using the latest achievements of science and engineering was stressed. The Kazakhstan ministries of light and food industry have already done much to actualize this program. Thus, whereas the republic Ministry of Light Industry invested 16.8 million rubles in retooling and renovation in 1976, that figure was 21.6 million in 1978. In 1979, 24.7 million rubles, or 30 percent of all its capital investments, will be directed into those areas. For the Ministry of Food Industry, the proportion of such expenditures has risen to 14.3 million, or 25 percent. During the 10th Five-Year Plan, we have succeeded in reducing the number of projects under construction at the same time and the number of new construction projects and have thus ensured better concentration of capital investments. In these branches, that coefficient has risen 0.12, to 0.70-0.88. Such concentration has enabled us

to increase by one-fourth the amount of capital investments going to each construction project and, thanks to this, to reduce planned construction schedules by an average of two months.

Stroybank financial institutions have also played a definite role in these positive advances. At the planning stage (including the arranging of financing), particular attention has been paid by the bank's economic and engineering service to a thorough check of the capital construction plan, title and intraproject title lists, financing in strict accord with construction duration norms, the provision of projects with the necessary estimate-planning documentation, and the use of the most economical designs. At the suggestion of the bank, eight new production-facility construction projects with annual investments of 1.63 million rubles were eliminated from the plan in 1978. The allocations thus freed were directed into completing projects scheduled for start-up that year, which made it possible to increase the start-up of fixed assets by 3.1 million rubles for these ministries.

In order to avert the planning of projects not provided with estimate-planning documentation, Stroybank institutions always check to see that it is present. As a result, all construction projects and facilities included in the 1979 capital construction plan had the necessary documentation. However, as before, the total estimated cost of those projects planned exceeded the optimum in these branches, although it decreased somewhat as against 1976. One reason why the optimum estimated cost was exceeded, in addition to cost instability, has been the scattering of investments among many projects being put up at the same time; that stretches out planned construction schedules. For example, in 1977 the Kazakh SSR Ministry of Food Industry approved title lists for two new construction projects. For one, 44 percent of the allocations due under construction duration norms for the first year was not provided, and for the other -- more than half. The same applies in the Ministry of Light Industry as well.

The CPSU Central Committee and USSR Council of Ministers Decree "On Improving Planning and Strengthening the Influence of the Economic Mechanism on Improving Production Efficiency and Work Quality" outlines a number of measures to cut short such practices. One is the attaching of great importance to the construction project title list. These lists will now be a planning document which remains unchanged throughout the construction period and will be binding on the client, subcontractor, on planning, financial, banking and supply agencies, and on suppliers of equipment and components. The amounts of construction-installation work will be distributed in title lists by year of construction, based on the necessity of putting production capacities and facilities into operation within the planned schedules, which will not exceed the norm. Bank institutions will continuously finance capital investments for production-facility construction projects within the estimate amounts only on the basis of such title lists.

In the course of the year, production capacities and facilities are being put into operation unevenly, the bulk of the construction being completed

in the fourth quarter. Unevenness leads to storming and construction quality deteriorates. Of the 15 Ministry of Light Industry projects put into operation in 1976-1978, some 66 percent were accepted with evaluations of "good" and 34 percent with evaluations of "satisfactory"; of the 10 Ministry of Light Industry enterprises put into operation, three had evaluations of "good" and the rest were "satisfactory." It is necessary to approach the allocation of funds comprehensively, with consideration of technological sequentiality, of starting up basic and auxiliary shops, housing projects, public health and children's preschool institutions simultaneously. But these facilities are often put into operation after production facilities, which sometimes creates a nearly insoluble personnel problem. Turnover at several new enterprises exceeds 20 percent, and that given a personnel shortage! At the Kapchagayskiy Porcelain Plant, put into operation in 1975, there was still a shortage of industrial-production personnel of 263 persons as compared with the planned number; 40 percent of the workers had no housing and 19 percent had no access to children's preschool institutions.

As a result, utilization of production capacities was delayed. Full-utilization schedules have expired at three of the seven Kazakhstan Ministry of Light Industry enterprises put into operation, and checks run by the bank have shown that one of the main reasons was a shortage of workers. For that same reason, seven of the 28 republic Ministry of Food Industry construction projects surveyed were also behind in utilizing capacities.

Stroybank institutions are paying a great deal of attention to improving engineering-monitoring work at the design stage. Forestalling inappropriate construction at this stage enables us to reveal and bring into play significant reserves for improving the economic effectiveness of capital investments.

An inventorying of estimate-planning documentation for unfinished construction in the ministries of light and food industry showed that as of 1 January 1979, there was more than 2-3 years worth of such documentation, and unproductive expenditures in it had reached 452,000 rubles for 26 projects. That means the ministries had not ordered estimate-planning documentation on the basis of actual need. At the same time, some of the planned construction turned out to be lacking documentation. Thus, for the Ministry of Light Industry, of the documentation developed for 59 projects estimated to cost 130 million rubles and at a cost of 1.5 million rubles as of 1 January 1979, by the end of the five-year plan, documentation had not been used for 36 projects (worth 117 million rubles), or 90 percent of the total; for the Ministry of Food Industry, for 170 projects estimated to cost 199 million rubles, they planned to use documentation for only 94, worth 114 million rubles (52 percent) during that same period.

At the same time, installation of a number of projects is begun without approved complete estimate-planning documentation. For instance, they began building the Ministry of Light Industry's silk fabrics combine in Ust'-Kamenogorsk in 1972. The initial calculated construction cost of 42 million rubles was determined approximately and financing was done on preferential

terms following plans and estimates for individual projects right up to March 1975. Complete estimate-planning documentation was developed by the State Institute for Textile Industry Planning in Moscow and was approved at 163.8 million rubles, with industrial construction of 121.7 million rubles. The estimated cost of the latter had increased 79.7 million rubles over the calculated amount, due primarily to incorrect calculation at the technical-economic substantiation stage. The increase in estimated cost extended the planned construction period by 60 months. For eight of 23 Ministry of Food Industry projects surveyed, estimated cost increased by 11 million rubles, or 46.3 percent, as against the cost initially approved. Increased estimated cost of installing this ministry's Alma-Ata Tobacco Combine was seven million rubles, or 116.6 percent, but cigarette production capacities increased only 25 percent.

The industrial projects of light and food industry are often included in the capital construction plan 3-5 years after their plans have been approved. In that time, design resolutions are reviewed and obsolete components and equipment are replaced, which naturally increases estimated cost. As a result, the ministries have been forced to direct some of the capital investment allocated into meeting increased estimated cost expenditures, which retards the rates of branch development.

The course charted by the party and government towards accelerating development of Group "B" branches depends largely of promptness in putting production capacities and fixed assets into operation. Unfortunately, actual food and light industry enterprise construction schedules often exceed those planned. During the 10th Five-Year Plan, 93 percent of the light industry projects in Kazakhstan were released behind schedule, and the country did not receive needed output on time.

As the proportion of capital investments in retooling grows and expenditures on the active portion of the fixed assets increase, so does the importance of using equipment in construction. Failure to meet schedules for releasing it for installation and the associated accumulation of above-plan inventories freeze state means for long periods and sharply lower the effectiveness of investments.

As checks run by the bank have shown, the failure to balance the amount of capital investment allocated with deliveries of equipment is a major cause of accumulation of above-normative equipment inventories. Thus, in 1979, the Ust'-Kamenogorsk Silk Fabrics Combine was allocated 4.5 million rubles to acquire equipment, but it had already received equipment worth 5.4 million rubles in the first half of the year.

Each year, assignments in the financing plan on reducing stocks of uninstalled equipment are not met. The Ministry of Light Industry was to have mobilized internal resources with 5.5 million rubles by reducing circulating assets by 7.4 million rubles in 1978; the latter were actually reduced by 4.8 million rubles. In the Ministry of Food Industry, where circulating assets increased by 0.4 million rubles, rather than decreasing, uninstalled equipment

Included 3.4 million rubles worth of imported equipment whose scheduled release for installation had expired.

Statebank workers are called upon to perfect their methods of monitoring, to ensure that it becomes a very effective means of increasing the effectiveness with which capital investments are used.

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CONSUMER GOODS PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION

GREATER ROLE URGED FOR LOCAL INDUSTRY, COOPERATIVES

Moscow TRUD in Russian 1 Feb 80 p. 1

[Article: "From Local Resources"]

[Text] The Party and the government display tireless concern over the improvement of the welfare of the Soviet people. The daily income of the population is growing; incomes are multiplying in every family. As a consequence, the task is to achieve a commensurate growth of the population's income with the possibilities of the market, a harmony of this proportion. In other words, more goods are needed. Their quality must be better and selection wider.

Our industry supplies the demands of the market with many types of goods. However, interruptions in the trading of goods whose production is not a technically complex problem still take place. In many cases this is explained by miscalculations in the planning and study of demand, by interruptions in supply. But it is often the case that it is possible to produce the desired goods locally -- and both the raw materials and the capacities exist. However, the hope for delivery from the outside fetters the initiative of local organs of power. As a result, a so-called shortage forms. This is why, as Comrade L. I. Brezhnev emphasized at the November (1979) Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU, it is necessary that local industry and consumer cooperatives be occupied more thoroughly with the production of consumer goods and, what is more, with initiative.

Musical instruments and dishes, furniture, clothing, footwear, artistic goods and souvenirs, and toys are far from a complete assortment of goods which are turned out by enterprises of local industry. In this connection, they are the only supplier for several goods, and if it were not for such a producer our counters would look much more meager. Last year, enterprises of local industry provided consumers with 10.4 billion rubles of production and almost 8 billion rubles to trade organizations through marketable stock. It should be noted that these industries have also achieved high quality indicators in many union republics. In Estonia, 44 percent of the total volume of goods subject to certification turned out by local enterprises has the State Seal of Quality. In the Ukraine, the

figure is 23 percent. Collectives of the Moscow keyboard instrument factory, "Zarya," the Bendery experimental production association, "Vigore," and the Tallinn production association, "Norma," were awarded diplomas by the All Union Central Trade Union Council and Gosstandart for best results in the struggle to turn out production of the highest quality.

Enterprises of consumer cooperatives are making a significant contribution toward increasing the output of goods in heavy demand. An all union industrial association has been created within the Central Union of Consumer Cooperatives system to produce consumer goods. It currently turns out more than 300 million rubles of production. Of course, the technical possibilities of cooperatives are limited, and they do not produce complex goods. Nevertheless, initiatives and a business-like approach to the needs of the market aid many managers in adjusting their production output, an output which really belongs to the specialized enterprises of corresponding ministries.

In Estonia, for example, cooperatives -- and only they -- produce synthetic and chemical detergents, self beauty treatments and perfume goods. In Georgia, the Terzhola combine of construction materials and economic goods adjusted to the production of crystal. The Carpathian Oblast Union of Consumers' Societies produces goods from local clay, vine, horns and hoofs, down, non-standard raw leather, etc., which is valued at 26 million rubles. In the oblast every year, they make more than 500 types of goods from ceramics and majolica, more than 500 kinds of souvenirs from horns, wood and metal, approximately 70 types of goods from vine, and more than 500 varieties of finished textile products.

At the same time, both of these oblasts do not use in full measure opportunities for the production of consumer goods. The proportion of production manufactured from industrial wastes and local raw materials comes to 5.4 percent at the enterprises of the Ministry of Local Industry of Uzbekistan, four percent in Tadzhikistan, two percent in Turkmenistan, and 1.4 percent in Azerbaijan.

In conditions when requests for trade in the simplest goods in these republics are not fulfilled, but where the raw materials for production of economic and domestic small items exist, the stability of these figures (they do not change from year to year) is simply inadmissible. It is also not possible to satisfy a situation when the production of goods enjoying demand is reduced. In recent years the RSFSR Ministry of Local Industry reduced the output of feminine toiletries by 5.2 million units. Their production was reduced by 2.9 million units in the Ukraine and by 5.6 times in Uzbekistan even though the population's demand for these products is not being satisfied.

Enterprises of local industry are oriented basically toward the acceptance of raw materials from centralized funds, neglecting the opportunity to make goods whose production it is necessary to spend a certain amount of effort on. In the city of Kommunarsk there is a clothing factory of the Voroshilovgradskaya Oblast Ministry of Local Industry. There they manufacture up to 30 kinds of textile goods. And not far away is a plant for economic goods which, instead of turning out kitchen utensils, also was occupied with sewing. Such a reorientation brought neither value nor profit, and it should not have been counted on. At the same clothing factory, capacities were slightly more than half utilized, and it could make goods with great success, production for which it was intended.

The decisions of the November (1979) Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU require the creation of conditions of high exactness, organization, and a creative attitude toward work in all sectors of the national economy, in every production cell. Therefore, industrial committees of trade unions and managers of enterprises of local industry and consumer cooperatives must develop a complex of measures which will guarantee an essential increase in the output of consumer goods from local resources and must monitor the fulfillment of this task. It is necessary to everywhere bring to light and to take into consideration sources of industrial wastes, to determine a possibility for their versatile and complete adaptation in the production of the simplest goods, souvenirs, artistic articles and other articles of heightened demand.

It is necessary to more actively support and to disseminate the progressive experience of collectives of enterprises which are developing and putting into production new high quality goods and which are renovating and expanding their selection, utilizing raw materials and other materials which up to now have not been used in manufacturing. Local trade union committees must regularly pose questions in the day's schedule for the carrying out of plans and quotas for the production of consumer goods and for the more complete utilization of capacities, and they must intensify organizational work in collectives for the raising of the responsibility of each worker for the quality of his work.

A broad field of activity is also opening up for trade workers. It is incumbent upon them to exhibit more persistence, achieving increases in deliveries of goods from enterprises of local industry and consumer cooperatives whose output is dependent upon their efforts. It is necessary to organize work so that the share of consumer goods of small-scale industry grows from year to year.

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CSO: 1827

CONSUMER GOODS PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION

HOW TO REDUCE STOCKS OF UNMARKETABLE GOODS

Novosibirsk EKONOMIKA I ORGANIZATSIYA PROMYSHLENNOGO PROIZVODSTVA in Russian No 12, 1979 pp 109-115

[Article by A. P. Yarkin and A. I. Levin, candidates of economic sciences, Central Mathematical Economic Institute of the Academy of Sciences USSR, Moscow: "The Problems of Disposing of Unmarketable Goods"]

[Text] Attention today is focused on such large-scale problems as improving the system of national economic planning and management, raising production efficiency and product quality, and developing scientific-technical progress. This is entirely understandable because much depends on solving these problems. Real economic development, however, is constantly running up against a mass of particular problems, and some of them have a strong impact on the condition of the entire economy. We consider the problem of so-called "unmarketable" goods to be one such problem.

Why Do We Have Them?

Of course, we ordinary customers are more disturbed by shortages of goods, when we cannot buy something that we need; a surplus does not upset us. But after all, it is difficult to buy what we need precisely because many unneeded things are lying on the shelves. Often we return home after wasting substantial time and getting into a bad mood at the stores, and we say, "What an abundance of unnecessary things, but it is hard to buy something essential." At this time we do not reflect on what such an "abundance" means for the country's economy.

In the last 10 years the sum of above-norm commodity stocks (which is practically the same as accumulation of unmarketable goods) in the retail trade network has almost never dropped below one billion rubles in value, and in some years it has surpassed 3 billion rubles. Even goods such as television sets, refrigerators, washing machines, and stockings and socks made of elastic materials, which sold well not long ago, have begun to accumulate in above-norm stocks.

Unsold stocks of goods must be stored. Several million rubles are spent for this purpose each year. Even under the most ideal conditions of storage the goods lose their "market look," their quality decreases, and trade organizations are forced to lower prices for them. In addition, the state loses part of its net income in the form of the turnover tax and deduction from profit. In formal terms the state budget does not feel these losses because, under the system of calculations, the turnover tax and deductions from profit are collected before the commodity is sold to the population. However, this does not change the essence of the matter; while it creates the illusion that things are fine, in reality, the rubles from the goods lying unsold at depots and stores are not being received at Gosbank. All these rubles are excluded from economic circulation. In this way, the "abundance" restricts opportunities for producing the goods which we want to find at the store.

This urgent problem can, it would seem, be solved very simply: just stop producing unmarketable goods and produce desired ones. But the trouble is that it is impossible to stop. Either public demand was incorrectly determined or industry was unable to switch in time to the production of marketable items. Possibly industry did not want to switch because the plan needed to be fulfilled. In some cases the proper raw material was not available and inferior materials had to be used. There are many reasons that unmarketable goods appear, but the result is always the same: they accumulate in the trade network and national economic losses grow.

What Is the Answer?

Under the current system of planning and economic stimulation industrial enterprises are indifferent to their own unmarketable goods. They have received their money, and paid their workers, and they continue to produce the goods, frequently disregarding the complaints of powerless, but enterprising trade organizations. Their enterprise is not directed to the source of the unneeded goods, but rather to ways of selling goods that, for industry, have already been "sold." Many commodity experts look for areas of heightened demand. They make phone calls, write letters, travel around, and organize fairs, usually with no thought of the advisability of such expenditures for selling. Large-scale shipments of goods to other regions frequently take place, involving expenditures that make no economic sense whatsoever. Another reason manipulation of commodity stocks does not have the necessary impact is that the sale of certain goods may be difficult everywhere, as was the case with sewing machines.

The most effective way to reduce commodity stocks of unmarketable goods is to mark down retail prices. In our economy, however, this is not a popular practice and it is not always evaluated positively. "When the price of unmarketable goods is lowered," opponents of this measure object, "the state fails to receive part of planned financial savings

and industrial enterprises do not cover all the costs of producing these goods." It is difficult to argue with this statement. But at the same time, it is equally true that if a commodity, in terms of its consumer qualities, does not meet a social need (in this case public demand) or is produced in a quantity exceeding this need, the state receives nothing at all, not just a lesser amount.

In our economic system losses from reducing retail prices are often much less than actual losses borne by the economy burdened with above-norm stocks of these commodities. It is much more advantageous to lower the price than to wait, when even at a lower price nobody buys the commodity. Reducing retail prices has been done many times in the country, and usually it has achieved the desired results: an increase in the sale of unmarketable goods and a reduction in above-norm stocks. Here is just one example.

In 1978 the price of television sets was reduced and this immediately stimulated the demand for them: sales rose 12 percent compared to 1977.

The principal reason that reducing prices may be ineffective is that operational flexibility is lacking in the matter. Prices are reduced only when demand for the commodity has fallen off hopelessly. This must be a preventive measure. A slowdown in demand is already a signal which must be received without vacillation and delay. The second important shortcoming that diminishes the real economic impact is the stability of new prices. The wave of growth in sales drops off, but the economic mechanism does not respond at all. A third problem is the narrow range of articles whose prices can be reduced. On a nationwide scale prices are reduced for those articles whose prime costs are quite low. If goods with a high prime cost become difficult to sell, planning agencies are extremely reluctant to mark down prices.

In our view, in such a situation (where marketing of goods is difficult because of fairly high production costs) it might be possible to use temporary price markdowns and then, after a definite time, return the price to its previous level. In each particular case the period of the temporary price reduction should be dictated by concrete sales conditions. In any case, the periods of time should be sufficient to "wipe out" above-stocks of commodities, thus creating favorable market conditions.

How To Set Lower Prices?

Setting lower prices ["utsenka"] for commodities is a fairly common procedure in trade and one that is less regulated than marking down ["snizheniye"] retail prices. But the problem of setting lower prices for perishable goods, for example, continues to be critical. Large stocks of fruits and vegetables often accumulate at the stores, especially during the seasons of large-scale production. For this reason

stores refuse to accept new batches of goods. Large amounts of fruits and vegetables rot in the field and at supply depots, as well as in the stores. Economically speaking, this happens because the stores have very limited rights to set lower prices, and they do not use them at the proper time.

It is relevant to recall the experience of the city of Riga in selling milk. Permission was given there to set a price 10 kopecks per liter lower than usual for milk whose selling time had expired. Milk could be sold at the new price for 48 hours. If it was not sold during this time, it was sold for three kopecks a liter as waste food. As a result, overall losses from milk spoilage were reduced 30 percent.

An analogous principle could be applied to all other food products and goods. It would be wise to set a selling period for each commodity, after which the price would be lowered and the commodity turned over to a special store "at reduced prices."

The lack of selling periods and the stores' restricted rights to set lower prices for commodities are significantly aggravated by financial difficulties. At the present time financing for setting lower prices comes from two sources, the state budget and the capital of trade organizations. Neither source is unlimited. When it allocates capital to reduce the price of unmarketable goods, the state is forced to save on something else, which may be equally important to satisfy consumer needs. But on the other hand, the planning of such commodities continues in industrial sectors, and much more capital is spent for their production.

Each year several hundred million rubles are subtracted from the profit of trade organizations for the fund for setting lower prices (0.5 percent of retail trade). A fairly large part of this significant amount is transferred to the state budget and this capital is used to finance centralized price reductions. In addition, the trade enterprises themselves try to "save" capital in the fund for setting lower prices, thus increasing their own profit.

It can be seen from the above that the capital for setting lower prices for unmarketable goods is usually insufficient. Here too the answer lies with production. At the present time industrial enterprises do not participate directly in financing the process of setting lower prices for their goods, although in a majority of cases they are the ones responsible for the appearance of such goods on the market. Therefore, it would be wise to institute a system under which lower prices would be set for unmarketable goods at the expense of the profit of industrial ministries, associations, and enterprises. This would increase the capital available for setting lower prices and, thus, broaden opportunities for selling these goods. At the same time such a system would increase the material accountability of suppliers for real (not merely reported) sale.

All of this has already been tested by experiment. As far back as 1973 the profit of industrial enterprises in Latvia was used to finance setting lower prices for defective footwear, knitted goods, and garments in the trade system. The experiment was repeated at those light industry enterprises of Armenia where goods had production defects, followed outdated styles, or were generally poor in quality. The results of the experiments were positive, but such a system has not yet been applied for the national economy as a whole. Meanwhile expenditures for setting lower prices have increased, while financial sources have remained the same. It is definitely time to work out a special state document that entrusts enterprise capital to set lower prices and defines the rights and duties of enterprises in this situation.

What Kind of Advertising?

It often happens in practice that neither reducing prices nor setting lower prices for goods changes anything. Unmarketable goods remain unsold, and the customer will not take them. Many times the customer simply does not know that the prices are lower. The national price markdowns may be known from newspapers or radio, but the customer sees nothing in the store, no advertising reaffirming this event and comparing new and old prices. It is even harder to learn that a lower price has been set for goods, although sometimes the best trade enterprises hold special exhibit-sales for goods that have gone out of style and are not in demand. Any activities involving selling at lower prices must be advertised with all available means, just as persistently as for new goods. It must be kept in mind that setting lower prices for goods stimulates demand only in the first two months, but after that the customer becomes used to the new prices and demand stabilizers. In other words, the mechanism of retail prices is very closely tied to the organization of trade.

The economic impact obtained from reducing above-norm stocks of goods and accelerating their rate of turnover is quite substantial. Speeding up the circulation of commodities in the country by just one day would release several hundred million rubles for the national economy.

Timely price markdowns, well-organized advertising, and organization of trade setting lower prices for goods are activities that will help rid the economy of above-norm stocks of consumer goods.

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CONSUMER GOODS PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION

MORE RESPONSIVE APPROACH TO CONSUMER NEEDS

Novosibirsk EKONOMIKA I ORGANIZATSIYA PROMYSHLENNOGO PROIZVODSTVA in
Russian No 12, 1979 pp 102-109

[Article by Candidate of Economic Sciences N. V. Minayeva, docent at Moscow Technological Institute of Domestic Services: "The Consumer and Production"]

[Text] Every one of us has seen how at times supply interruptions suddenly occur in the retailing of goods which are by no means new products, which have been in full-scale production for some time. Such phenomena have long disturbed planners, economists, and business executives in industry and commerce. All kinds of attempts have been undertaken to eliminate such occurrences. A new planning and report indicator was introduced at the beginning of 1978, for example -- volume of sales taking goods deliveries into account. It seemed that this would affect many aspects of the activities of enterprises and would help better take account of the interests of the consumer.

Deliveries of goods not ordered by ~~merchandisers~~ ceased being credited to the performance of light industry enterprises. This of course reduced consumer goods assortment foulups, neutralized in some measure the division of consumer goods into profitable and unprofitable to manufacture, helped hold the pursuit of sales volume in check, and strengthened the role of the product mix target.

But even the new indicator, adopted without attendant conditions, failed to solve those problems which had changed in form. Enterprises continued to focus more on "percentage" than on the interests of the consumer. In determining a production schedule, those orders included in the target would be adapted to the capabilities and interests of production. In meeting deliveries quantitatively, enterprises would manipulate product types, kinds, grades and sizes, delivering one in place of another. Product mix substitution with the agreement of the customer became a customary practice in light industry. Under conditions of short supply and tight plan balance sheets, the customer is unable to wield influence on the supplier. This indicator makes performance results and payment of bonuses on the basis of these performance results dependent on circumstances which are independent of the work force: lack of raw materials, and delayed deliveries through the fault of the railroad.

For example, the Zagorsk War Goods Factory, which is supposed to produce rabbit fur hats, does not receive even half of the raw materials it needs. At the beginning of 1979 the Bolshevskiy Feed Mix Plant was forced to shut down due to a lack of grain. The Knitwear Production Association imeni F. E. Dzerzhinskiy, while overfulfilling the overall volume indicator in 1978, undersupplied the Vsesoyuznaya Trade Firm and the Moskva Department Store in a number of outer knitwear models, due to failure to provide uniform delivery of raw materials in the planned variety, colors and sizes (polyester and triacetate fabrics). With an overall overfulfillment of the children's wearing apparel assortment, they failed to meet target on 10 out of 50 models.

The new indicator failed to eliminate the conflict between sales volume and the customers' needs. Sales volume targets were always met and exceeded with goods which were profitable from the standpoint of rating the enterprise's performance. This rating was most frequently overstated. Now the structure of the product variety ordered by the customers failed to produce the required total volume. A problem arose on how to manage to satisfy actual requirements and at the same time to generate the required volume indicator. At a number of enterprises the production program for 1979, calculated taking into account the orders of customers and trading organizations, failed to correspond to directive figures in the total amount. The directive figures are considerably greater than production capabilities.

This is why one cannot help but be pleased at the CPSU Central Committee and USSR Council of Ministers decree entitled "On Improving Planning and Strengthening the Effect of the Economic Mechanism on Improving Production Efficiency and Product Quality." In this decree an important role is assigned to a new indicator -- net output (normative) growth. One's attention is drawn also by the following lines: "Production associations (enterprises) and organizations shall have specified in their annual plans the list (variety) of manufactured products according to customer orders, in conformity with signed contracts."

This problem of conflict between production volume and consumption is no less acute for domestic services enterprises, which in recent years have both technically and economically acquired an industrial countenance. Here associations and enterprises in the current five-year plan are given a directive sales volume indicator which specifies high sales growth; for custom wearing apparel factories, for example, it frequently amounts to 12-13%. How are the managers of these factories supposed to meet their target figures if the sum total of actual individual orders in value terms does not generate the targeted volume? This means that from the very outset the efforts of factory managers and the work force are focused not only on achieving their direct goal (satisfying individual-order requirements) but also on maneuvers ensuring that the targeted volume is achieved: selection among orders, priority going to profitable ones (where there are more orders than can be filled), diminished quality of execution, and artificially boosting the complexity of an order (for example, in repairing home appliances more work billed than is actually required).

Experience has shown that all enterprises have greater incentive to achieve the volume target indicator than to satisfy real needs. Enterprises of the machine building industry, for example, after changing over to the new indicator in 1978, overfulfilled the sales volume plan and underfulfilled the deliveries plan, with the sum total of delivery shortfalls exceeding the sum total of overfulfillment by volume. Moscow trade enterprises -- such as GUM, TsUM, Vesna, Detakiy Mir -- overfulfilled their retail sales targets, while at the same time decreasing sales figures on a number of essential items: upper knitwear, virgin wool items, cotton undergarments, jumpers.... Of course the manufacture of any new goods involves increased labor during the period of production start-up. Labor requirements are also still high on some items which have been in series production for years. For example, during the first months of this year Moscow trade organizations were unable, to use their own words, "to select stocks" according to labor-intensive items, that is, enterprises were delivering less labor-intensive items, regardless of retailer orders.

Recently there has been considerable study of consumer demand and adoption of quality systems. At light industry enterprises the quality control departments have been monitoring fulfillment of amicable agreements with retail stores and trading firms and have been participating in organizing exhibit-type sales, where demands by product list item is determined in detail. The practice of purchaser questionnaires, keeping sales records on unpopular items and on sale of test batches of new products is expanding. All this is exerting some influence on shaping the production programs of industrial enterprises. But for the time being only "some." The fact is that on the one hand filling orders and satisfying demand encounter not always surmountable difficulties: attainment of the targeted volume figure, shortage of raw materials, replacement of obsolete equipment, shortage of manpower.

On the other hand, if the focus is placed on existing raw materials and equipment capabilities and on attaining the targeted volume figure with expensive product items, somebody of the 150-200 customers will take them: trade is obligated to select its allocated stocks. Judging from the fact that year after year trade overfulfills the retail goods turnover and profit targets with enormous quantities of price-discounted goods and above-standard inventories, the targets and standard goods turnover figures specified for retail trade make it possible to work with the following principle: choose as large a quantity of goods from the supplier as possible -- some of it will sell. Of course the mass consumer experiences small joys evoked by goods bearing the Seal of Quality or the top quality category mark, which theoretically should be equal to the world level. But take information coming to enterprises from trade organizations and wholesalers. You will find a great many examples of shoddy quality and price reductions on "world level" goods.

The sales target fulfillment indicator taking supply deliveries into account did not per se provide incentive for enterprises to improve product quality or update the product mix. It is necessary specially to

plan manufacture of new product items. At light industry enterprises, for example, a coefficient of product mix renewal is specified, and target fulfillment by product item groups is ranging from 30 to 50% in 1979. That would seem to be fine, but experience indicates that new product items included in the plan are frequently selected so that it will be easier to reach the required sales volume. An increase in the coefficient of renewal additionally "washes out" an inexpensive and popular mix of goods and boosts prices.

At domestic services enterprises a number of new services (with profitability and price consequently higher than the branch average) have appeared in connection with poor quality light industry products. Shoe enterprises, for example, cannot learn how to manufacture good glued shoes (the sole pulls loose), and personal services enterprises additionally stitch-repair these shoes. Light industry cannot keep up with the styles, and personal services enterprises come to the aid of those who desire to be stylishly clothed and shod. What this means is that a substantial portion of the work of light industry is spontaneously transferred over into the service area, where both the capital-labor ratio and labor productivity are still low. The nation's economy as a whole loses thereby in labor productivity and costs.

It would be unfair to claim that the new mix of consumer goods is determined totally separate from the consumer and style. The above-mentioned exhibit-sales, questionnaires, special departments to study consumer demand at every large enterprise, as well as special aesthetics commissions, art councils, artist-pattern makers, style houses.... It would seem that all the ingredients are present to make a balanced combination of "volume-variety-style-demand." But volume continued to predominate, regardless of any new performance indicator adopted and regardless of what system of performance rating was elaborated. Always something was not working as intended.

And in this connection let us take a look at the mechanism of public acknowledgement. It consists today and in the foreseeable future in paying for the value of a product, in the act of "purchase-sale," in the influence of the consumer. Let us pose a simple question: has the following point contained in the Central Committee Report to the 25th CPSU Congress been carried out? "Give the consumer -- whether it be raw materials, supplies, machinery and equipment, or consumer goods -- a greater opportunity to influence production." An economic system based on short-supply resources and tough plan balances, as well as no competition for the consumer, does not give the consumer the opportunity to influence the manufacturer and realistically to influence production. Consumer-manufacturer feedback expressed in trips to supplier plants or postcards inviting to arbitration do little for the economy.

If we have commodity-money relations, the manufacturing work force, having earned a better rating by the consumer, obtaining a larger number of orders

and greater volume of sales, should also have appreciably greater funds for enterprise expansion and financial reward for the employees -- and vice versa.

What is impeding us, and what does our economy need? First of all, it is necessary to establish, possess and maneuver genuine reserve production capacity at enterprises, reserves of raw materials, supplies, and semi-finished goods within the supply system. It is necessary to put an end to the search for concealed reserves; they should be open. Only then will planning of sales volume taking account of goods deliveries on the basis of business contracts acquire force and genuinely reflect the performance of enterprises. And concrete measures were proposed in this regard in the July decree of the CPSU Central Committee and USSR Council of Ministers.

It would be better to leave unsold goods on the balance sheet of the enterprise which manufactured them, while trade and supply should not have funds for purchase of unpopular and poor-quality goods.

Planning of volumes in the 11th Five-Year Plan will proceed in an upward direction and begin after determining demand and signing contracts, while the personal services industry can operate without plan-targeted volume, since it is impossible to envisage or stipulate that volume in advance. Of course the growth rate in this area would diminish somewhat, but actual requirements would be more fully satisfied.

It is desirable to simplify the procedures of ratification of prices on new products and to give enterprises some independence in the matter of lowering prices on the basis of contractual agreements with trading organizations and depending on demand. As is obvious to everybody, renewal of the product mix causes an increase in prices, because they are always based on one-time outlays connected with putting new product items into production, outlays which are not covered.

Determination of prices on first experimental batches of goods and especially stylish product items, differentiation of trade discounts in relation to quality, consumer properties and demand, establishment of a unified scientific and technological development fund, broadening of credit possibilities in turning out new goods -- these and other measures specified in the July decree of the CPSU Central Committee and USSR Council of Ministers should alter the described situations in large measure.

Any enterprise manager will say that his enterprise does not have the capabilities for rapid production readjustment to the manufacture of needed and new higher-quality products. We see that new equipment, especially in light industry, is going to new enterprises, while old factories, which possess experienced veteran workers, specialists and executives, "seek out their own reserves" in place of utilizing new equipment to maximum effect. New work stations are set up, with a shortage of manpower. Deliveries to new enterprises are made without taking account of modernization and renovation of old enterprises operating machinery 25-35 years old and more, as well as profit sufficient to purchase new machinery.

There is an exclusive circle of interrelated elements of production management: determination of the intra-branch structure of demand, order, production, public acknowledgement by the purchase-sale of goods, opportunity for customer choice, manufacturing capacity, raw materials and product reserves, effort to receive a higher rating by the consumer and to obtain maximum volume of orders, actual utilization of a portion of enterprise profit to readjust production and to provide employee incentives. If even one element is left out of this group, the undesirable phenomena discussed above will appear.

Implementation of the July (1979) decree of the party Central Committee and government will make it possible in the 11th Five-Year Plan to neutralize such phenomena to a substantial degree. Many additional instruments and incentives will be put into action, improving operation of the economic mechanism.

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